Thursday, January 19, 2023 | Omni Richmond Hotel



LOCAL GOVERNMENT DAY







Contents

Tips for Effectively Communicating with Legislators	
General Assembly Committees Meeting Schedule / Status of a Bill	
Budget Amendments	
Finance	
Housing / Land Use	1
FOIA / COIA	1
Education	

Human Services	18
Transportation	21
Environment	22
Courts / Public Safety	22
Labor	23
Elections	24
Marijuana	24
VML Staff and VACo Staff	25
Senators	26
Delegates	27

Tips for Effectively Communicating with Legislators

While you are in Richmond

Take advantage of your time in Richmond by meeting with your legislators. This is the best way to make the issues that are important to your locality known to your delegation. When meeting with senators or delegates:

Be brief. A short conversation is all that is needed to make a big impression.

Have the bill numbers. Being able to reference specific legislation keeps the conversation on track.

Explain your concern. It's not enough to say you like or dislike a particular piece of legislation. You should be prepared to say why.

Have a specific ask: This is your chance to make sure they understand that you're not asking for something they *should* do, you're asking for something they *must* do.

Reference your locality. Be sure to remind the legislator that you represent or work for their constituents from a particular town, city, or county. An invitation to visit is always a great way to make this point.

Have a business card ready. You may need to leave it with their assistant. Write the bill number that you want to discuss on the back.



A well-written letter or email is one of the best ways to thank your legislator for meeting with you and to remind them of your thoughts and opinions about a particular issue. Here are some tips for getting your message across effectively:

- **Be brief.** Legislators have many demands on their time. They appreciate communications that are short and to the point.
- **Put the message in your own words.** Group emails, form letters and petitions don't have the same impact as personal, informed opinions.
- Address your email to a specific legislator or legislators. Depending on your message, you may want to write to the sponsor of a bill, certain members of a committee, or your own legislators. Don't address your message to the entire Legislature.
- **Identify bills** by their number, title, and sponsor.
- Explain your position on the bill and ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- **Give any sources of information** that you use to make your point.
- Include your name and address so they have a way to respond.

Contact information for each legislator can be found online:

Senate: http://apps.senate.virginia.gov/Senator/index.php

House of Delegates: https://virginiageneralassembly.gov/house/members/members.php

Address letters to:

Senator XXXX Delegate XXXX
Senate of Virginia Pocahontas Building
P. O. Box 396 900 E. Main St.
Richmond, VA 23218 Richmond, VA 23219



During the interim

Outside of a legislative session, the legislative branch *does not* maintain staff or facilities through which constituents may contact their legislators.

Instead, constituents may contact legislators directly through any of the means listed on their individual webpages which can be accessed by clicking on a legislator's name:

Senate: http://apps.senate.virginia.gov/Senator/index.php

House of Delegates: https://virginiageneralassembly.gov/house/members/members.php

NOTICE: Legislators are publicly elected officials. Communications with Legislators involving legislative business may be considered a "public record" pursuant to Virginia law. As such, email sent or received, its sender and receiver, and the email's contents and attachments, may be subject to public disclosure, except as otherwise provided by Virginia law.

Online Resources



General Assembly committee meetings schedule

Scan the QR code to view the most recent meeting schedule.



Check the status of a bill

- 1. Use the QR Code to access the LIS bill search tool.
- 2. Enter the bill into the search box (i.e., HB1234)
- 3. Click "GO"

Budget Amendments

VML and VACo have worked with legislators and partner organizations to introduce a package of budget amendments that advance local government priorities. VML and VACo are also supporting several priority amendments that were requested by partner organizations that are of importance to local governments. All member budget requests were made available earlier this week; staff continue to review these proposals and VML and VACo will be sharing additional information on amendments of particular interest in future communications with members.

Budget proposals are being considered by the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees. Both Committees are scheduled to report their respective budgets on Sunday, February 5.

Please thank the patrons of these amendments and encourage your legislators to support these proposals, particularly if your General Assembly members serve on the House Appropriations Committee or the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee.

Elimination of cap on recognition of K-12 support positions

<u>Item 137 #8h (Davis)</u>, <u>Item 137 #34h (Avoli)</u>, <u>Item 137 #31h (Bourne)</u>, and <u>Item 137 #5s (McClellan)</u> provide additional funding for K-12 support positions. Since 2009, the state has arbitrarily capped its support for these positions at a ratio that does not reflect local prevailing practice. Though significant progress has recently been made in restoring funding to pre-2009 levels, approximately \$270 million is still needed to make localities whole. These amendments provide additional funding or fully eliminate the cap.

KEY POINTS:

- Support positions are currently arbitrarily capped at a ratio that does not reflect the need for these positions or the local prevailing practice.
- Support staff (such as school psychologists, school social workers, and licensed health and behavioral positions, cafeteria workers, IT professionals, administrative personnel, custodial staff, etc.) have decreased since 2009, even as the number of students has risen statewide. This means less support for more students.
- Many of these positions are geared to support mental health and student wellness and allow for students
 to have the support needed to achieve successful educational outcomes. The number of economically
 disadvantaged students, English Learners, and students with certain disabilities has increased disproportionately
 to general student population, and so have their needs.
- Furthermore, adjusted for inflation, state direct aid for public schools has fallen by 3.4% since 2009. Local governments have taken on this share of the funding burden, investing more than \$4.2 billion beyond what they are required to do so to support K-12 education, yet many localities struggle to raise sufficient revenue to meet the growing needs of students and communities.

Instructional aides

<u>Item 137 #30h (Maldonado)</u> / <u>Item 137 #10s (Norment)</u> / <u>Item 137 # 11s (McClellan)</u> provides \$38.6 million GF in FY 2024 for the state's share of funding for instructional aides. Currently, instructional aides are only funded for kindergarten and special education. This amendment is intended to provide additional state support for positions that are currently funded only with local dollars.

KEY POINTS:

- This amendment reflects increased state basic aid for school divisions employing instructional aides to reflect local prevailing practice.
- The SOQs fund only a portion of the actual prevailing costs of K-12 education in Virginia.
- This amendment is meant to provide additional state support for school divisions for positions that they are currently funding on their own without state support.
- Teacher Aides are vital positions that work with a teacher in the classroom to provide extra help and attention to students. They help enforce classroom rules and help supervise children during free time like recess and lunch.

They may work with students one-on-one or in groups to help reinforce lessons the teacher discussed. Teacher aides often help teachers track assignments and attendance, prepare lesson materials and equipment and more. Some teacher aides may work in specific areas of a school, such as a computer lab.

Flexibility in teacher compensation increase and bonus payments

<u>Item 1237 #2h (Watts)</u> / <u>Item 137 #9s (Ebbin)</u> / <u>Item 137 #26s (Marsden)</u> remove the requirement for school divisions to provide at least an average 2.5 percent salary increase in each year of the biennium in order to access the state share of the 5 percent compensation supplement that is proposed for each year of the biennium, and clarify that the proposed retention bonus for instructional and support staff would be provided at local option.

KEY POINTS:

- Local governments recognize the difficult work done by teachers and school staff and make considerable local
 contributions toward compensation, in addition to funding additional positions in excess of what is recognized by
 the Standards of Quality.
- By virtue of this large number of locally-funded positions, localities fund an estimated 56 percent of salary
 increases in order to provide the local match for the SOQ-recognized positions as well as the local funding
 required to provide equivalent salary increases for locally-funded positions in order to treat the school workforce
 equitably.
- This amendment would provide flexibility in implementing the compensation actions in the introduced budget in recognition of the significant number of positions that would not be covered by the state funding for the salary increase and retention bonus.

School capital (language only)

Item 137 #32h (Morefield) / Item 137 #7s (McClellan) provide additional guidance on the eligibility of School Construction Assistance Program applicants by allowing a multi-year review of local composite index and fiscal stress, allowing projects where construction began on July 1, 2022, to be eligible, as well as allowing the principal portion of future debt service payments on projects not yet began as an eligible expense. These were recommendations from the Board of Education and the Commission on School Construction and Modernization.

KEY POINTS:

- According to the Commission on School Construction and Modernization, more than half of K-12 school buildings in Virginia are more than 50 years old. The amount of funding needed to replace these buildings is estimated at \$25 billion.
- The condition of the facilities in which children are educated has a direct impact on their ability to learn. Issues like inadequate climate control, lack of modern electric circuitry and internet capacity, and leaking roofs can negatively affect student assessment performance and staff morale.
- Many localities face significant challenges in raising sufficient funds to undertake these projects.
- This funding represents a significant investment to help address this issue.

School capital funding

Item 137 #6s (McClellan) provides \$2.5 billion GF in FY 2024 to increase funding of School Construction Grants Program by \$500 million GF in FY 2024 and increase funding of the School Construction Assistance Program by \$2 billion GF in FY 2024. These programs represent the first time since the Great Recession that the State has made significant investments in helping local governments with school capital costs. These amendments provide additional funding. This is a recommendation of the Commission on School Construction and Modernization.

KEY POINTS:

- According to the Commission on School Construction and Modernization, more than half of K-12 school buildings in Virginia are more than 50 years old. The amount of funding needed to replace these buildings is estimated to cost \$25 billion.
- The condition of the facilities in which children are educated has a direct impact on their ability to learn. Issues like inadequate climate control, lack of modern electric circuitry and internet capacity, and leaking roofs can negatively affect student assessment performance and staff morale.

- Many localities face significant challenges in raising sufficient funds to undertake these projects.
- This funding represents a significant investment to help address this issue.

Jail per diems

<u>Item 73 #1h (Krizek)</u> / <u>Item 73 #1s (Reeves)</u> would restore the local-responsible per diem rate from \$4 to its pre-FY 2011 level of \$8.

KEY POINTS:

- The local-responsible per diem rate was cut in half in FY 2011, from \$8 to \$4. "Local-responsible" inmates are individuals who are incarcerated in a local correctional facility while awaiting trial, individuals convicted of misdemeanor offenses, or individuals convicted of felony offenses with a sentence of one year or less.
- The 2022 General Assembly increased the state-responsible per diem rate from \$12 to \$15. This funding increase is much appreciated and is a critical step in the right direction toward increasing state support for jails. Revisiting the local-responsible rate will provide important assistance to local and regional jails, as there are more local-responsible offenders in local and regional jails and the population of state-responsible inmates in local and regional jails declined significantly over the last year.
- Virginia localities make a substantial contribution to the housing and care of inmates in local and regional jails. According to the Compensation Board, in FY 2021, localities contributed \$601.4 million in operating and capital costs for jails and jail farms and an additional \$16.4 million to house inmates in other jurisdictions; the state through the Compensation Board contributed \$361.3 million.

Deputy sheriffs' staffing

<u>Item 72 #6h (LaRock)</u> / <u>Item 72 #7h (Wyatt)</u> / <u>Item 72 #2s (Boysko)</u> would provide \$13.4 million GF in FY 2024 for 302 additional deputy positions in FY 2024.

KEY POINTS:

- State Code requires the Compensation Board to fund one law-enforcement deputy for each 1,500 people in a jurisdiction in which the sheriff bears primary law enforcement responsibilities. This staffing ratio has not been fully funded since FY 2008, leaving localities to fund positions necessary to support the operations of sheriffs' offices. The Compensation Board calculates that 302 deputy positions are required to meet the 1:1,500 statutory ratio.
- Local law enforcement agencies have been stressed with recruitment and retention challenges. Localities make significant local contributions toward public safety, including providing salary supplements and locally-funded positions in Sheriffs' offices, in addition to positions funded by the Compensation Board, but the continued partnership of the state in support of this critical function of government is essential.

Aid to localities with police departments ("HB 599")

<u>Item 410 #1h (McQuinn)</u> / <u>Item 410 #2h (Brewer)</u> / <u>Item 410 #3h (Hayes)</u> / <u>Item 410 #2s (Edwards)</u> provide \$20.8 million in FY 2024 in aid to localities with police departments to align funding for this program with the percentage change in total general fund revenue collections, in accordance with statutory requirements.

KEY POINTS:

- The Operation Bold Blue Line proposal in the introduced budget will provide important recruitment and retention resources for state and local law enforcement in the near term; HB 599 funding is a complementary program providing ongoing state support for local police departments.
- Localities that receive HB 599 funding contribute significant local funds to their local police departments. In FY 2023, localities that receive HB 599 funds have been allocated \$210.8 million from this funding source and reported budgeting \$2.4 billion in local funds for this purpose.

Reimbursement to localities for 2024 Presidential primary expenses

<u>Item 485 #1h (Sickles)</u> / <u>Item 485 #1s (Deeds)</u> provide an additional \$1.4 million to increase the reimbursement amount included in the introduced budget for the 2024 Presidential primary.

KEY POINTS:

- Virginia Code requires the costs of the Presidential primary to be paid by the Commonwealth.
- The introduced budget includes an appropriation of approximately \$5.8 million to reimburse localities for costs associated with the 2024 primary. This amount is the same as what was appropriated in 2020; localities reported costs of approximately \$5.7 million to administer that primary.
- In order to account for growth in the number of registered voters and inflation in the intervening years, as well as the increasing complexity of election administration, the budget amendments request an additional \$1.4 million for 2024 primary expenses.

Election resources

VACo and VML continue to advocate for a more robust partnership with the state in funding election administration. In addition to supporting budget amendments requested by VACo and VML this year that would increase the reimbursement to localities for costs associated with the 2024 Presidential primary, VACo and VML encourage members to discuss additional state support for election administration with their legislators.

KEY POINTS:

- In recent years, the state has provided important limited-time assistance to localities to assist with certain election administration costs. For example, the state funded the statewide redistricting mailer, as well as providing funds for postage for absentee ballots and the state match for federal cybersecurity funds.
- The state's main avenue of ongoing support for local election administration is through partial reimbursement for registrars' salaries and electoral board member compensation. In FY 2022, the reimbursement covered approximately 87 percent of registrars' salaries and 82 percent of electoral board compensation (based on compensation levels in the state budget, which do not reflect additional supplements provided by many localities).
- VML and VACo are grateful for the state's efforts, but more work is needed to improve the partnership in this fundamental responsibility of government, as localities are shouldering most of the ongoing costs of election administration.
- In the FY 2021 Comparative Report of Local Government Revenues and Expenditures prepared by the Auditor of Public Accounts, localities reported expenditures in support of elections of \$75.6 million, of which \$7.3 million came from the state, and \$7.3 million was from federal CARES Act funds. In other words, localities contributed \$61 million in local dollars to administer elections. The total budget for the Department of Elections in FY 2023 is \$31.6 million (\$10 million of which is budgeted for partial reimbursement for general registrar and electoral board member compensation), with an additional appropriation for the Presidential primary in the Central Appropriations section of the budget.

Recordation tax distribution to localities

<u>Item 266 #1s (Stuart)</u> provides \$20 million from the general fund in FY 2024 to be distributed amongst localities, as was done prior to 2020. This funding can be directed toward transportation or public education purposes.

- Prior to the 2020 General Assembly session, a portion of recordation tax revenues had been distributed to counties and cities since 1993. Funding was distributed quarterly and could be used for transportation or public education purposes.
- VACo and VML support the restoration of state recordation taxes being distributed to localities.

Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF)

<u>Item C-80 #1h (Bulova)</u> / <u>Item C-80 #1s (Hanger)</u> increases SLAF funding by 9.9 million. SLAF is a grant-based funding program for localities managed by the Department of Environmental Quality. Grants can be used by localities to make stormwater improvements including capital improvements that reduce pollutants and improve water quality and implement stormwater best management practices.

KEY POINTS:

 Stormwater improvements are capital intensive and essential for improving water quality across the commonwealth.

- SLAF provides matching grants to localities for planning, design, and implementation of stormwater best management practices that are cost effective and improve water quality.
- SLAF grants are essential for helping localities fund capital stormwater projects by implementing best management practices. Funding can be used for capital improvement projects such as stream restoration, wetland restoration and pond restoration projects.

Additional amendments of interest

<u>Item 75 #1h (Bulova)</u> provides \$1.7 million in FY 2024 to fully fund the remaining unfunded positions in local offices of the Commissioners of the Revenue.

<u>Item 77 #1h (Morefield)</u> provides \$680,030 in FY 2024 to fully fund the remaining unfunded positions in Circuit Court Clerks' offices. <u>Item 77 #3s (Norment)</u> provides \$637,920 in FY 2023 and \$695,912 in FY 2024 for unfunded Circuit Court Clerk positions.

<u>Item 78 #2h (Williams)</u> provides \$505,459 in FY 2024 to address unfunded and underfunded positions in Treasurers' offices; <u>Item 78 #2h (Kilgore)</u> and <u>Item 78 #1s (Lucas)</u> provides \$3 million in FY 2024 for unfunded deputy Treasurer positions.

<u>Item 266 #3s (McPike)</u> provides \$34.5 million in FY 2024 to provide half of the tax revenue forgone by localities as a result of the property tax exemptions for disabled veterans and surviving spouses of members of the armed forces killed in action.

<u>Item 266 #5s (Stuart)</u> provides \$12.6 million in FY 2024 to fund legislation that would require the state to subsidize the state-mandated local real estate tax relief for disabled veterans and surviving spouses of members of the armed forces killed in action when more than one percent of a locality's real estate tax base is lost due to such programs.

Finance

Bills to support

Study; JLARC; Compensation Board funding for the offices of certain constitutional officers; report.

<u>HJ461</u> (Ware) directs JLARC to study Compensation Board funding for certain constitutional officers including Sheriffs, Commonwealth's Attorneys, and Clerks to review recent trends in general fund support for these offices, the metrics by which support is determined, the equity of state support among differing localities, and the degree to which localities are supplementing the Commonwealth's funding. VML and VACo support this legislation.

State subsidy of property tax exemptions for disabled veterans and surviving spouses of military members killed in action.

<u>SB1032</u> (Stuart) (Finance and Appropriations) requires the state to reimburse localities if more than 1 percent of taxable real estate is exempt pursuant to the Constitutionally required property tax exemptions for disabled veterans and surviving spouses of members of the armed forces killed in action. VML and VACo have historically supported this proposal.

Bills that affect the 1 percent local option sales tax

Several bills reopen a compromise agreed during the 2022 Session that preserved the 1 percent local option sales tax. Legislation has been introduced during the 2023 session to eliminate the 1 percent local option sales tax on groceries and other products.

Sales tax; exemption for food purchased for human consumption and essential personal hygiene products.

SB850 (Suetterlein) (Finance and Appropriations) / HB1484 (McNamara) (Finance) eliminates the 1 percent local option sales tax on food purchased for human consumption and essential personal hygiene products, resulting in a significant reduction in revenue to local governments. Localities use this revenue generated from their communities to address unique local needs. While the bill attempts to replace these lost local revenues with a fixed general fund allocation,

this solution will not be able to account for changes in the local sales tax base over time and can easily be capped or eliminated by the state in the future. VML and VACo oppose this legislation.

Local sales and use tax; exemption for essential personal hygiene products and infant formula.

<u>HB2196</u> (Byron) (Finance) exempts essential personal hygiene products and infant formula from the 1 percent local option sales and use tax. Under current law, such products are exempt from state sales and use tax but are subject to the local 1 percent option. VML and VACo oppose this legislation.

Sales and use tax, local; exemptions for food purchased for human consumption.

<u>HB1686</u> (Greenhalgh) (Finance) / <u>SB1008</u> (DeSteph) (Finance and Appropriations) provide permissive authority for cities and counties to exempt food purchased for human consumption and essential personal hygiene products from local sales and use tax.

Real property taxation

Real property taxes; rate of increase procedure.

HB1749 (Walker) (Finance) limits local ability to raise revenues by imposing a new process for adoption of the real estate tax rate in situations where real property assessments are increasing. Under current law, when any annual assessment, biennial assessment, or general reassessment of real property by a county, city, or town would result in an increase of 1 percent or more in the total real property tax levied, the locality has two options: reduce the tax rate for the forthcoming tax year so as to produce no more than 101 percent of the previous year's real property tax levies, or, if deemed necessary by the governing body, a rate that produces more than 101 percent of the previous year's levies may be imposed after conducting a public hearing on the issue. Statutory provisions govern the timing and manner of public notice of the hearing, as well as stipulating the contents of the notice.

VML and VACo oppose this legislation, which will likely be heard in the House Finance Committee.

KEY POINTS:

- Under the bill, if the proposed increase to the tax rate (above the lowered rate that would otherwise be required) is less than 3 percent, the increase could be approved by a majority vote of the governing body after a public hearing, which could not be held on the same day as the annual budget hearing.
- A proposed increase of more than 3 percent but less than 5 percent could be approved after public hearing but would require a supermajority vote of two-thirds of the governing body.
- An increase to the rate of levy of 5 percent or greater would require a referendum.
- Real property taxes are the mainstay of local revenues and local elected officials need flexibility to raise revenues necessary to fund critical public services such as K-12 education, public safety, and behavioral health.

Real property tax; exemption for disabled veterans and surviving spouses.

<u>HB1470</u> (Watts) (Finance) / <u>HB2361</u> (Wiley) (Finance) provide that taxpayers who are eligible for the real property tax exemptions for disabled veterans and their surviving spouses and for the surviving spouses of servicemembers killed in action are entitled to refunds of taxes paid retroactive to their date of eligibility, potentially extending back to the date the exemptions were first enacted (2011 for the disabled veterans and surviving spouse exemption and 2015 for the exemption for surviving spouses of servicemembers killed in action). Refunds for most local taxes extend back to the current and three prior years. The bills seek to clarify some ambiguity between the statutes enacting the property tax exemptions and the general statute governing tax refunds.

VACo and VML are working with the patrons and seeking to establish a reasonable lookback period that does not expose localities to potentially large, unanticipated refunds while also affording taxpayers a fair opportunity to apply for exemptions.

Personal property taxation

Personal property taxes; valuation.

<u>HB1402</u> (March) (Finance) proposes a major departure from assessing property at fair market value by requiring tangible personal property that is employed in a trade or business, and machinery and tools, to be valued according to the federal

Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS), which is a method of recovering the costs of business or incomeproducing property through deductions for depreciation on federal income taxes. Under MACRS, there are several methods for the calculation of depreciation deductions, depending on the type of property; two of these methods record larger depreciation during the earlier years of an asset's useful life and smaller depreciation during the asset's later years, and the third assumes depreciation at a steady rate over the asset's useful life.

Under MACRS, once property is fully depreciated, it is considered to have no value. Current assessment practices recognize that older property retains residual fair market value. If that value is no longer considered part of the local tax base, localities will have to turn to other sources to raise revenue, thus shifting the tax burden from businesses to other taxpayers. For this reason, VACo and VML oppose this legislation.

Business, Professional and Occupational License (BPOL)

BPOL taxes are once again a target for changes, potentially reducing revenues to local communities.

Local license taxes and fees; exemptions; blog or online website.

HB1920 (Hope) (Finance) prohibits localities from collecting license fees for publishing any blog or online website containing daily or regularly updated news, feature articles, advertisements, or correspondence, provided that such blog or online website employs full time at least one journalist who has a Virginia taxable income. This bill has the potential to exempt from BPOL small "mom and pop" entities and larger corporate entities, resulting in negative revenue impacts in localities. Staff is reaching out to the patron to understand the intent of the bill and consider any possible improvements.

License taxes; deductions.

<u>HB2200</u> (Robinson) provides a deduction from BPOL for anti-cancer drugs purchased by a medical practice and administered within a physician-patient relationship to patients. The exemption applies to drugs that are administered to a patient whose costs for treatment are paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, or TRICARE. While narrowly drawn, enactment of this law would reduce revenues used to provide local services. The proponents of the bill have been contacted to discuss possible alternatives.

Constitutional amendments and related bills affecting local revenues

Constitutional amendment (first reference); tax and finance; exempt property; affordable housing tax exemption.

<u>HJ498</u> (Carr) / <u>SJ247</u> (Hashmi) would allow the General Assembly to authorize local governing bodies to provide for partial or full property tax exemptions for real estate owned and occupied by persons of low income or low financial worth. Local governing bodies would be authorized to establish income or asset limitations for the exemptions.

Constitutional amendment (first reference); real property tax exemption; surviving spouses of soldiers who died in the line of duty.

HJ533 (Tran) / SJ231 (McPike) (Privileges and Elections) extend the current real property tax exemption for the surviving spouse of any member of the armed forces of the United States who was killed in action to surviving spouses of servicemembers who die in the line of duty with a Line of Duty determination from the Department of Defense. Legislation enacted in 2022 authorizes localities to declare property owned by these surviving spouses as a separate class of property and impose a different rate of taxation than that imposed on the general class of real property (this rate can be lower than the general real property tax rate but cannot be zero).

Constitutional amendment (first reference); personal property tax; exemption for motor vehicles owned for personal, noncommercial use.

HJ462 (Anderson) is a Constitutional amendment that would exempt from taxation motor vehicles (defined as automobiles, motorcycles, and pickup trucks) owned by an individual for personal, noncommercial use. The amendment does not address reimbursement to localities for lost revenue, and localities participating in the Commission on Local Government's fiscal impact statement process identified significant potential revenue impacts from the elimination of this revenue source (as well as the assumed elimination of the current \$950 million provided by the state each year for personal property tax relief reimbursement to localities). The 2021 Comparative Report of Local Government Revenues and Expenditures documents localities deriving \$2.9 billion in personal property tax revenues, the bulk of which are attributable to personally owned, noncommercial vehicles.

Bank franchise companion bills being monitored

Bank franchise tax.

Under HB1896 (Byron) (Finance) / SB1182 (Ruff) (Finance and Appropriations), banks with at least \$40 billion in Virginia deposits could elect to pay the bank franchise tax to the Department of Taxation, which would deposit 80 percent of receipts into a Local Bank Franchise Tax Fund. The Department would distribute funds to counties, cities, and towns based on population. Under current law, banks file returns and remit payment locally. VACo and VML are currently assessing the impact of this legislation on localities.

Housing and Land Use

Oppose bills overriding local authority to extend land use approvals to July 1, 2025

Local land use approvals; extension of approvals to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

HB1665 (Marshall) (Counties, Cities and Towns) / SB1205 (Lewis) (Local Government) would extend previously expired local land use approvals to July 1, 2025. During the 2020 Special Session, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the legislature passed a measure to extend to July 1, 2022, any local land use approvals, including rezonings and special use permits, which were valid as of July 1, 2020 (NOTE: in 2022 the legislature extended the validity to July 1, 2023). This means that all land use approvals in Virginia that expired after July 1, 2020, would arbitrarily be extended another two years, regardless of whether applicants are actively pursuing commencement of construction.

VACo and VML support maintaining local authority to plan and regulate land use and VACo opposes this proposal as it weakens these key local responsibilities.

Action Required: Contact your delegate and senator to vote "NO" on HB1665 and SB1205.

KEY POINTS:

- Localities have proactively addressed the processing of land use applications and building permits during the
 coronavirus pandemic, and local planning commissions and governing bodies are continuing to meet and
 consider rezoning and special use permits.
- Any developer can apply to extend an approval directly with the locality that granted it, many of which have
 existing criteria and procedures to do so, either administratively or through legislative act.

VACo and many local governments oppose bills gutting authority of localities to regulate short-term rentals; VML is monitoring this legislation

Short-term rental property; locality's ability to restrict property managed by a Virginia realtor.

<u>HB2271</u> (Marshall) (Counties, Cities and Towns) / <u>SB1391</u> (Lewis) (Local Government) would exempt short-term rental property managed by a Virginia realtor from any short-term rental ordinance. Specifically local governments may not enforce the following items:

- Prohibition of short-term rentals.
- Limits occupancy to less than allowed by the building code or local zoning regulations.
- Limit the number of days that the property can be rented.
- Requires an owner to occupy the property.
- Requires remote monitoring devices.
- Requirement exterior or interior pertaining to items under the building code more frequently than every 5 years unless there is a complaint.
- Requires repairs, renovations, or updates to the structure of the short-term rental greater than the building code.
- Requires additional parking.

Action Required: Contact your delegate and senator to vote "NO" on HB2271 and SB1391.

KEY POINTS:

- Local governments have the authority to regulate and address any potential impacts from the operation of short-term rentals within their community.
- Mandated changes to this authority, including exemptions, will erode the ability of local elected officials to address impacts from the operation of short-term rentals.

Proposed housing study needs local government input

Study; Virginia Housing Commission; affordable housing; local regulation; report.

HJ507 (Marshall) proposes that the Virginia Housing Commission develop recommendations on local government zoning authority to "... streamline and enhance predictability in local development review processes and alleviate the effects of local policies or ordinances that contribute to increased housing costs and constrain the supply of affordable and workforce housing." Unfortunately, the study does not name the stakeholders and assumes that local government processes are the problem in the creation of affordable and workforce housing. It is imperative that local governments be named as stakeholders in this study and the study should look at all issues related to the supply of affordable and workforce housing.

Action Required: Contact your delegate and senator to vote to "INCLUDE" local governments as stakeholders in HJ507 proposed study.

KEY POINTS:

- Local governments in Virginia are developing strategies and innovations to address housing supply shortages at both the local and regional level. They need more, not less, flexibility in state-enabling authority to do so.
- Any statewide study to address the supply of housing should include consultation with local governments on how to partner with them in tackling this issue.

Bills to require comprehensive plans to address housing affordability include authority to include affordable housing dwelling unit provisions in zoning ordinances

Affordable housing; local zoning ordinance authority; comprehensive plan.

HB2047 (Carr), SB1141 (McPike) (General Laws) / SB1331 (McClellan) (Local Government) seek to authorize any locality in the Commonwealth to provide for an affordable housing dwelling unit program by amending the zoning ordinance of such locality. Current law restricts such authorization to counties with an urban county executive form of government or county manager plan of government and certain other localities. In addition to this new authority, HB 2047 and SB 1331 require that local comprehensive plans "...shall not, intentionally or unintentionally, limit choices and opportunities for affordable housing geographically based on income and shall include methods to address the sustainability of affordable housing, including property maintenance requirements and avoidance of demolition by neglect." Additionally, comprehensive plans must show the connection between the location of affordable housing and

- Economic development efforts that bring new jobs to a community.
- The location of mobility resources that are appropriate for and affordable to the residents of areas occupied by, designed for, or zoned for affordable housing units and that provide access to multiple jobs, shopping, services, and educational opportunities.
- The availability of accredited, high-quality, affordable education resources and facilities to serve the needs of local residents.
- The location of parks, indoor and outdoor recreation, and libraries within walking distance of such affordable housing.

Oppose bill to make accessory dwelling units (ADU) a by-right use

Accessory dwelling units.

<u>HB2100</u> (Hudson) mandates that any single-family dwelling (SFD) be permitted to include an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). Specifically, the bill states that localities...

- Shall permit owners of land where an SFD is permitted to build an ADU if one does not already exist.
- Shall allow ADUs to be built before, after, or concurrently with the primary dwelling.
- Shall not enact an owner occupancy requirement on a lot with a primary dwelling and an ADU. An owner may occupy either the primary dwelling or the ADU and may rent either the primary dwelling or the ADU, or both.
- Shall not require parking for ADUs, although localities may require that a property owner replace parking required for the principal dwelling unit if the ADU construction eliminates preexisting parking.
- Shall not require a minimum lot size for an ADU that is larger than the minimum lot size required for a single-family house in a given district.
- Shall not require side or rear setbacks for ADUs larger than five feet.
- Shall not prevent a homeowner from converting an existing structure to an ADU by requiring setbacks larger than the current structure's setbacks.
- Shall not apply local growth restriction rules or density limitations to ADUs.
- Shall not set limits on the square footage of ADUs other than preventing them from being larger than the primary dwelling unit, provided that other limitations on massing are met.
- Shall not charge impact fees for any ADU less than 750 square feet in size. Any impact fees charged for an ADU of 750 square feet or more shall be charged proportionately in relation to the square footage of the primary dwelling unit.
- Shall enforce local requirements and limits on height, front setback, lot coverage, site plan review, and other zoning requirements generally applicable to residential construction for the zone where the ADU will be built, unless otherwise prohibited.

Action Required: Contact your delegate to vote "NO" on HB 2100.

KEY POINTS:

- Local governments have the authority to allow for the inclusion of ADUs within their zoning ordinances and determine the context of where ADUs can be reasonably accommodated to meet the needs of residents and homeowners.
- A mandate to authorize an ADU wherever a single-family dwelling exists excludes input from citizens and communities on whether, and how, ADUs can fit within existing and proposed residential developments.

FOIA / COIA / Public Notice

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Local administrative investigations; disclosure.

HB1878 (Williams Graves) (General Laws) clarifies that personal contact information, to include a home or business (i) address, (ii) email address, or (iii) telephone number or comparable number assigned to any other electronic communication device, when furnished in confidence to a local governing body with respect to complainants in local investigations, is exempt from disclosure under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. The bill also provides that information in completed investigations shall be disclosed in a form that does not reveal the identity of the complainants or persons supplying information to investigators. This bill is supported by VML and VACo.

Localities; record of legal settlement or judgment; disclosure.

<u>HB1880</u> (Bennett-Parker) (Counties, Cities and Towns) requires localities to retain a public record of certain legal settlements and judgments and requires the record of such amount to be subject to disclosure if requested pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. VML and VACo have concerns about this bill.

Public records charges; electronic payment method.

<u>HB2006</u> (Roem) (General Laws) provides that any public body that charges for the production of public records pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act shall provide an electronic method of payment through which all payments for the production of such records to such locality may be made unless such locality lacks the necessary technology for receipt of such electronic payments. VML and VACo have concerns about this bill.

Posting of fee policy.

<u>HB2007</u> (Roem) (General Laws) requires a public body to make available upon request and post on its website or otherwise publish a written policy (i) explaining how the public body assesses charges for accessing or searching for requested records and (ii) noting the current fee charged, if any, by the public body for accessing and searching for the requested records.

Required release of law-enforcement disciplinary records; exceptions.

<u>HB1965</u> (Mullin) requires the release of law-enforcement disciplinary records related to completed disciplinary investigations. The bill requires the redaction of (i) certain personal contact information of the law-enforcement officer, complainant, and witness and of their families; (ii) social security numbers; (iii) certain medical and identifying information of the law-enforcement officer and complainant; and (iv) any technical infraction, as defined in the bill, by the law-enforcement officer.

Record exclusions; State Comptroller records.

<u>SB813</u> (Surovell) (Finance and Appropriations) provides that the exclusions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act related to the internal controls of the State Comptroller do not authorize the withholding of the name of any officer, official, or employee of a public body as it appears on a purchase card statement or other payment record or the description of an individual purchase appearing on any such purchase card statement or payment record.

Public meetings

Electronic meetings; local and regional public bodies.

HB2050 (Bennett-Parker) (General Laws) / SB1351 (Marsden) (General Laws) allow local and regional public bodies other than local governing bodies, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards, and boards with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend a professional or occupational license, to convene as many all-virtual public meetings as each such public body deems acceptable in its individual remote participation meeting policy, to be adopted at least once annually by recorded vote at a public meeting. Current law limits all-virtual public meetings to no more than two times per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater, and prohibits any such meeting from being held consecutively with another all-virtual public meeting.

Allow local public bodies to hold virtual meetings.

SB1309 (Deeds) (General Laws) allows local public bodies, except for boards with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend a professional or occupational license, to hold all-virtual public meetings in accordance with the other provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. The bill limits the requirement that public bodies do not convene all-virtual public meetings consecutively or more than twice per year to state public bodies.

Meetings of local governing body; live broadcast and archive.

<u>HB1487</u> (March) (Counties, Cities and Towns) requires localities to provide a live video broadcast of public meetings of the local governing body and to archive such broadcasts on their websites. VML and VACo have concerns about this bill.

Public notice

The first three bills are the result of a study within the Code Commission and are supported by VML and VACo.

Land use plans; zoning; notice.

<u>HB1473</u> (Fowler) (Counties, Cities and Towns) streamlines the notice requirements related to local government adoption of land use plans and zoning ordinances by no longer requiring the notice to contain a descriptive summary of the proposed action but continues to require the locality to identify in the notice the place or places within the locality

where copies of the proposed plans, ordinances, or amendments may be examined. Furthermore, such notice must include the street address or tax map parcel number of the parcels as well as the approximate acreage subject to the action. With regard to notice of proposed zoning actions, the bill also (i) removes the requirement to state general usage and density of the proposed zoning action and (ii) eliminates the requirement for an extra public hearing when land is zoned to a more intensive use classification than was contained in the previous public notice. VML and VACo support this bill.

Local government; standardization of public notice requirements for certain intended actions and hearings; report.

HB2161 (Williams) / SB1151 (Edwards) (Local Government) standardize and streamline the frequency and length of time that notices of certain meetings, hearings, and other intended actions of localities must be published in newspapers and other print media. The notice provisions included in the bill are organized into the following three groups: (i) publication required one week before the meeting, hearing, or intended action; (ii) publication required two consecutive weeks before the meeting, hearing, or intended action; and (iii) publication required three consecutive weeks before the meeting, hearing, or intended action. In addition, the bill amends provisions related to the content of notices for zoning ordinances and amendments to such ordinances by removing the requirement that such notices contain a descriptive summary of the proposed action and providing that such notices shall include the street address or tax map parcel number of the parcels subject to the action. In cases where the intended action affects more than 25 parcels, the notice must also include the approximate acreage subject to the intended action. The bill also removes the requirement that notices of proposed amendments to a zoning map state the general usage and density range of the proposed amendment and the general usage density set forth in the applicable part of the comprehensive plan. The bill directs the Virginia Code Commission to convene a work group to continue review of the notice requirements throughout the Code of Virginia and requires the Virginia Code Commission to submit a report to the Chairmen of the House Committee on General Laws and the Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology summarizing the work and any recommendations of the work group by November 30, 2023. VML and VACo support this bill.

Legal notices; online publications.

<u>SB1237</u> (Obenshain) (Judiciary) provides that, where any ordinance, resolution, notice, or advertisement is required by law to be published in a newspaper, such ordinance, resolution, notice, or advertisement instead may be published in an online publication, subject to certain requirements specified in the bill.

Conflict of Interests Act (COIA)

Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council; powers and duties; complaints; penalties.

HB2281 (Shin) authorizes the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council to investigate alleged violations of the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act and the General Assembly Conflicts of Interests Act (the Acts). The Council may initiate an investigation upon its own motion or in response to a complaint filed by a resident of the Commonwealth who has firsthand knowledge of an alleged violation. The bill directs the Council to review the disclosure forms filed by members of the General Assembly for compliance with applicable disclosure requirements and limitations on gifts and the accuracy of all information disclosed and authorizes the Council to initiate an investigation based on the findings of this review. The bill increases from a Class 1 misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony the penalty for any knowing violation of the General Assembly Conflicts of Interests Act.

State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act; Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council; training for members of appointed school boards.

HB2122 (Watts) / SB1416 (McClellan) (Education and Health) add members of appointed school boards to the list of persons for whom the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council is required to provide certain training sessions. The bill also changes from January 15 to February 1 the annual date for certain employees to file a disclosure statement with the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council.

Education

School capital financing

Additional local sales and use tax to support schools; referendum.

HB2316 (Bourne) (Finance) / SB1408 (McClellan and McPike) (Finance and Appropriations) authorizes all counties and cities to impose an additional local sales and use tax at a rate not to exceed 1 percent with the revenue used only for capital projects for the construction or renovation of schools if such levy is approved in a voter referendum. Under current law, only Charlotte, Gloucester, Halifax, Henry, Mecklenburg, Northampton, Patrick, and Pittsylvania Counties and the City of Danville are authorized to impose such a tax. This bill is a recommendation of the Commission on School Construction and Modernization. VACo and VML support this bill.

Additional local sales and use tax to support schools.

<u>SB1287</u> (Deeds) (Finance and Appropriations) adds Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville to the list of qualifying localities that, under current law, are authorized to impose an additional local sales and use tax at a rate not to exceed 1 percent, with the revenue from such tax used only for capital projects for the construction or renovation of schools. VACo and VML support this bill.

Local sales and use tax; construction or renovation of schools; Prince Edward County.

<u>HB1605</u> (Edmunds) (Finance and Appropriations) adds Prince Edward County to the list of localities that are authorized to impose an additional local sales and use tax at a rate not to exceed 1 percent with the revenue used only for capital projects for the construction or renovation of schools. VML and VACo support this bill.

Early childhood education

School Readiness Committee; renaming as Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education; purpose; membership; powers and duties.

HB1423 (Coyner) (Education) / SB1404 (Barker) (Rules) renames the School Readiness Committee as the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education and makes several changes to the Commission, including adjusting its purpose, increasing and adjusting its membership, and establishing eight enumerated powers and duties for the Commission. VACo and VML have a seat on the Commission and support the bill.

Appointed school boards

School board selection; referendum on direct election of school board members by voters; authorization by local governing body.

<u>HB1574</u> (Walker) allows the governing body of a county, city, or town to file a petition with the circuit court of the county or city or of the county within which the town or the greater part thereof is located asking that a referendum be held on the question of whether the members of the school board of the county, city, or town shall be elected directly by the voters. VACo and VML support this bill, which provides an additional tool in the toolchest of local governments.

Education Savings Account Program

Currently, there are several variations of the Virginia Education Success Account Program: <u>HB1508</u> (Davis) (Appropriations), <u>HB1396</u> (March) (Education), <u>HB1371</u> (P. Scott) (Education), <u>SB823</u> (Chase) (Education and Health), <u>SB1290</u> (DeSteph) (Education and Health), and <u>SB1191</u> (Reeves) (Education and Health).

These pieces of legislation each establish the Education Savings Account Program, which allows the parent of an individual, who is a resident of Virginia and is eligible to be enrolled in public school, to apply for an account. This account deposits state and local funds from the Department of Education for parents to use to educate children in places other than full-time public schools.

Each of these bills has a range of differences such as the definition of a "qualified student," whether eligible students should be counted in the average daily membership calculations, and if saving accounts can be used for homeschooling,

etc. Although different, at the core, each bill diverts funds from local school divisions to give to parents to use at nonpublic education establishments.

VML and VACo support the expansion of opportunities for innovation in the Commonwealth but not to the detriment of public education systems. Until the state fully funds education as constitutionally mandated, the state should not siphon money for private use. VML and VACo ask that you urge your delegation to oppose any attempt to divert funds meant for localities for nonpublic education use.

Teacher compensation

Teacher compensation; at or above national average.

<u>HB1497</u> (Convirs-Fowler) (Education and Health) requires public school teachers to be compensated at a rate equivalent to or greater than the national average. Under current law, the rate of compensation is aspirational stating that public teachers "should" be compensated. This requirement will use money from the general fund provided in the Governor's introduced budget as well as a required local match.

Although VML is in favor of paying the teachers of the Commonwealth the salary they deserve, VML opposes the minimum local threshold required to receive state funding to fulfill this requirement.

Compensation of public school teachers and other Standards of Quality-funded positions; competitive rate.

<u>SB1215</u> (Lucas) (Education and Health) has the same requirements as HB1497 as well as requiring state funding to be provided pursuant to the general appropriation act in an amount sufficient to fund a flat percent annual salary increase for SOQ-funded positions. This percentage will be determined based on calculations using national averages made by the Department of Education.

Although VML is in favor of paying the teachers of the Commonwealth the salary they deserve, VML opposes the minimum local threshold required to receive state funding to fulfill this requirement.

Unexpended local funds

School boards; unexpended local funds; capital reserve fund permitted.

<u>HB2399</u> (Simonds) allows any school board to create a savings reserve account to deposit an unexpended funds at the end of year for future school division capital expenditures. Currently, unexpended funds are appropriated back to the locality to redistribute as deemed fit.

VML and VACo oppose this legislation and any attempt to take local funds.

Human Services

Auxiliary grants

Auxiliary grants; independent community living.

<u>SB1269</u> (Edwards), referred to Senate Finance and Appropriations, and <u>HB1906</u> (Hope), referred to Senate Health, Welfare and Institutions, would expand the use of the Auxiliary Grant (AG) to individuals in independent community living. This is a departure from the traditional use of the grants, which have been used in assisted living, supportive housing, and adult foster care settings. Local governments pay a 20 percent match for each Grant.

The AG has been around since the 1970s and may not be the most effective way to address the growing numbers and needs of vulnerable adults. Increasing the AG awards and expanding eligibility to community-based settings were discussed in the Joint Commission on Health Care's 2022 study of affordability of assisted living facilities. In public comments to the Commission, VACo and VML encouraged the <u>state</u> to fund any AG increases or costs associated with expanding eligibility as well as expressing a preference that state policy makers look at modernizing the funding mechanism to support vulnerable adults. This issue is likely to be considered as part of budget deliberations in the committees.

Behavioral health

Several bills and budget proposals address behavioral health issues this year as the result of studies and commission work in the last year. Gov. Glenn Youngkin has made behavioral health one of his budget priorities this year. Below are some of the bills we are monitoring.

Behavioral Health Commission; agency assistance; access; records.

<u>HB2156</u> (Watts) (awaiting referral) / <u>SB1170</u> (Hanger) (Education and Health) would require state agencies, political subdivisions, and other entities to cooperate with Behavioral Health Commission on its studies and upon request, provide certain information and facility access. We are monitoring the bill.

Temporary detention

The following bills could help create a pathway for expeditious treatment or release for individuals who do not require commitment. We are monitoring them all.

Temporary detention in hospital for testing, observation, or treatment; mental or physical conditions resulting from intoxication.

SB1302 (Deeds) / SB808 (Favola) (both in Education and Health) / HB1792 (Ransome) (Courts of Justice) create an informed decision-making process for a hospital attempting to gain consent for treatment for an intoxicated individual who refuses such treatment because of his or her level of intoxication.

Involuntary admission; temporary detention; release of detained individual.

SB1299 (Deeds) (Rehabilitation and Social Services) / HB1976 (Bell) (awaiting referral) create a protocol for release of an individual awaiting transport to a facility of temporary detention if the director of the facility where the person is waiting determines, upon evaluation by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist, that the person no longer meets the criteria for commitment.

Community Services Boards (CSB)

We are watching several bills that address the CSB performance contract process and responsibilities of the state, CSBs, and local governments. These include:

Community services boards; behavioral health authorities; performance contracts.

<u>HB2185</u> (Rasoul) (awaiting referral) / <u>SB1169</u> (Hanger) (Education and Health) create requirements for the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and its Board regarding the monitoring of community services boards/behavioral health authorities' compliance with performance contracts and improvements to such monitoring.

Community services boards; behavioral health authorities; purpose; performance contracts.

<u>SB1465</u> (Hanger) (Education and Health) would require more specific/targeted goals and objectives in the performance contract between the state and CSBs/BHAs and reorganizes certain provisions of current law.

Alternative transportation and custody

Alternative transportation and custody were the subject of a 2022 workgroup. The Governor's budget includes some items, and the following legislation came out of that workgroup.

Emergency custody; temporary detention, alternative transportation.

<u>SB872</u> (Newman) (Education and Health) would direct magistrates to authorize alternative transportation if a person subject to a TDO or ECO is not deemed to be a danger to him/herself or others and appropriate alternative transportation is available. Current law allows magistrates to consider alternative transportation.

Substance Use Disorders

Continued issues with substance use disorder, especially growing opioid addiction, have garnered the attention of the General Assembly and Administration. Bills addressing these issues that we are monitoring include the following.

Commonwealth Opioid Abatement and Remediation Fund; established.

SB1414 (Pillion) (Education and Health) creates a Commonwealth Opioid Abatement and Remediation Fund to be administered by the Department of Health (VDH) for efforts to treat, prevent, or reduce opioid use disorder or misuse of opioids or otherwise abate or remediate the opioid epidemic or other approved purposes. Also directs VDH, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the Department of Corrections to develop and implement a plan for the distribution of naloxone throughout the Commonwealth and eliminates training requirements for use of naloxone.

Opioid impact reduction.

<u>SB1415</u> (Pillion) (Education and Health) would create a Commonwealth Opioid Impact Reduction Registry at the Department of Health that would list nonprofit organizations that work to reduce the impact of opioids, their contact information, and the services they provide. Localities could enter into contracts with organizations on the registry; contracts would be exempt from state public procurement regulations.

Children's Services Act

Sharing FAPT and CPMT information.

HB2018 (Adams) (awaiting referral) would allow a local family assessment and planning team (FAPT) or Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT) to share information with local law enforcement or threat assessment teams established by local school boards if a FAPT or CPMT obtains information from which the team determines that a child poses a threat of violence or physical harm to himself or others. Under current law, all information about specific children and families obtained by FAPT and CPMT members must be kept confidential. VML and VACo are monitoring this bill.

Use of CSA funds for special education.

SB1023 (Stuart) (Education and Health) would expand eligibility for funding of services under the Children's Services Act to students who transfer from an approved private school special education program to a public school special education program. This applies to local governments/school divisions within Planning District 16 where: (i) the public school special education program is able to provide comparable services to those of an approved private school special education program and (ii) the student would require placement in an approved private school special education program but for the availability of the public school program. VML and VACo support local initiatives to avoid out of community/private placements when possible.

Jails

Studies addressing jail operations and issues around substance use treatment in jails are addressed in some legislation this year, including the following bills.

Membership of Board of Local and Regional Jails.

<u>SB797</u> (Favola) (Senate Floor) would add a former superintendent of a regional jail (the current language is not as targeted) and add one individual employed by a public mental health services agency. VML and VACo are monitoring the legislation.

Jail-based substance use disorder treatment and transition fund.

HB1524 (Coyner) (Public Safety) / SB820 (Favola) (Rehabilitation and Social Services) would create this fund to support the planning and implementation of locally administered jail-based addiction recovery and substance use disorder treatment and transition programs in local and regional jails. The Department of Corrections would create guidelines and establish a grant procedure in cooperation with Sheriffs' Association and Association of Regional Jails. No funds awarded could be used to supplement funding for an existing program. VML and VACo support such initiatives to help local and regional jails with these services.

Jail fees.

SB889 (Morrissey) (Rehabilitation and Social Services) / HB2039 (Shinn) (House Public Safety) would place restrictions on commissary costs and eliminate any commissions or mark-ups from any items/services sold; restrict fees charged for receipt of funds to any inmates' account (no more than 3 percent of amount received); restrict fees for establishing/operating electronic visitation; eliminate charges for telephone services when calls are made to approved numbers (max number of allowed telephone numbers shall be no fewer than 20); require at least one telephone per every 10 inmates within each housing unit and forbid any commission from such telephone systems; forbid a jail from keeping any portion of wages earned to defray cost of keep or to pay travel or other expenses necessary for work releases or education/rehabilitation programs; and eliminate any fee for weekend/nonconsecutive days spent in jail. The provisions would go into effect July 1, 2024.

State compensation to jails.

SB966 (Peake) (Rehabilitation and Social Services) would require the Department of Corrections to compensate local and regional jails for the actual cost of incarceration as calculated in the annual jail cost report for any state responsible inmate who remains in a local or regional jail on the 61st day following the transmittal by the clerk of court to the DoC Director. VML and VACo support state compensation to local/regional jails holding state responsible inmates past the deadline for pickup outlined in the Code.

Transportation

School crossing zones.

HB2104 (Bourne) (House Floor) authorizes any locality to place a school crossing sign in a school zone, increases the default boundary of a school zone from 600 feet to 750 feet, and authorizes localities in Planning District 8 to reduce the speed limit in school zones below 25 mph without first conducting a traffic engineering study. VACo and VML support HB2104.

Powers of local authorities; reducing speed limits; highways in the primary and secondary state highway systems.

HB1939 (Plum) (Transportation) authorizes the governing body of any locality to reduce to less than 25 miles per hour, but not less than 15 miles per hour, the speed limit of highways that are part of the primary and secondary state highway systems located in a business district or residence district within the locality's boundaries. Currently, the law only authorizes the governing body of a locality that maintains its own roads to do this. This bill expands local authority to control speed limits in populated areas. VACo and VML support HB1939.

Distribution of recordation tax to counties and cities

<u>SB1161</u> (Stuart) (Finance and Appropriations) increases the annual distribution of recordation tax revenues to cities and counties, outside planning district 23, to \$40 million. These funds can be used by localities for transportation or public education purposes. VACo and VML support SB1161.

Bicycles; exemptions to certain traffic control devices; local ordinances.

SB1293 (Deeds) (Transportation) authorizes localities to pass an ordinance allowing cyclists to perform "Idaho stop" where the rider may treat stop signs as a yield sign by slowing and ensuring the right of way is clear of traffic and if so, proceed through the intersection without coming to a complete stop. There is also authority to pass an ordinance to permit cyclists to treat stop lights as stop signs by requiring riders to stop, yield to any traffic and proceed through the intersection with due caution. VML Supports SB1293.

Transit Ridership Incentive Program; funds; improving accessibility; transition to zero-emissions.

<u>SB1326</u> (McClellan) (Transportation) / <u>HB2338</u> (McQuinn) (Transportation) increases flexibility for transit systems seeking to use the Transit Ridership Incentive Program by increasing the amount of funding available under this program for capital improvements for passenger facilities like bus shelters and for systems transitioning to a zero emissions fleet and related capital costs. VML supports SB1326 and HB2338.

Towing trespassing vehicles; limitations on fees.

<u>SB979</u> (Marsden) (Transportation) pre-empts local authority to set towing fees at a rate other than the state maximum rate of \$180 proposed in the bill. VACo and VML oppose SB979.

Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund.

SB1106 (Newman) (Transportation) / HB2302 (L. Adams) (Transportation) are similar to budget language in the Governor's introduced budget (Item 452 subsections L-R) regarding the Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund. Requires the Governor to include an appropriation of up to \$200 million with no more than \$100 million each year for the Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund. These funds would be available for transportation improvements associated with economic development projects identified by the Governor and distributed by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. This funding would be an off the top distribution from transportation revenues.

KEY POINTS:

- Reduces total transportation funding by \$100 million each year
- Reduces total transportation funding by \$600 million over the six-year transportation improvement program.
- This will reduce the funds available for maintenance, construction, SMART Scale, and transit programs across the board.

VACo and VML oppose SB1106.

Environment

Waterworks and wastewater works operators; license reciprocity.

SB999 (Mason) (Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources) requires the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation to issue a reciprocal license in Virginia for waterworks and wastewater works operators licensed in another state. This bill helps localities with recruitment and retention of these necessary public works employees. VACo and VML support this legislation.

Landfill siting; proximity to private wells.

<u>HB1370</u> (Ware) (Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources) prohibits the siting of a new municipal solid waste landfill within one mile of any existing private water well. This bill pre-empts localities from developing new solid waste landfills within one mile of private wells. VACo and VML oppose this legislation.

License tax; ownership of dogs and cats.

<u>HB1406</u> (Anderson) (Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources) eliminates local authority to levy a license tax for owners of cats and dogs. This bill eliminates existing local authority and a local revenue source and reduces revenue for local animal control funding. VACo and VML oppose this legislation.

Waterworks; contaminants; PFAS chemicals; notification to customers.

<u>SB1013</u> (Edwards) (Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources) requires a public waterworks owner to notify customers via mailings and newspaper publication when a water quality analysis reveals that PFAS chemicals are present in a water supply or when a PFAS contaminant exceeds maximum contaminant levels. This bill creates new reporting requirement for public waterworks and notification of customers. VACo opposes this legislation; VML is monitoring.

Courts and Public Safety

Courts: Jury duty daily Pay

Jury duty; allowance increase.

SB789 (Spruill) would increase the daily pay to jurors in trials from \$30 to \$100. State code requires the locality to pay the jury duty expenses for civil trials and for misdemeanor charges under local ordinances. While VML and VACo appreciate citizens for their service on juries, the bill is an unfunded mandate on local governments. The Senate Judiciary committee reported the bill and referred it to Senate Finance for fiscal impact. That impact doomed the bill last year.

Courts: OPPOSE Unfunded mandate that requires locality to supplement public defender salaries.

Supplementing compensation of public defender.

<u>HB1429</u> (Anderson) mandates local governments to supplement public defenders' salaries if they supplement the salaries of Commonwealth's Attorneys' offices. Like legislation that failed in 2022, VACo and VML oppose this bill that requires that the governing body of any County or City that supplements the compensation of the Attorney for the Commonwealth, or any of their deputies or employees, to proportionally supplement the compensation of the public defender, or any of his deputies or employees.

ACTION REQUIRED: HB1429 will likely be voted on in the <u>House Courts of Justice Committee</u> on Friday January 20. Contact your delegate to vote "NO" on HB1429.

KEY POINTS:

- Public defenders are employed by the state through the Indigent Defense Commission. The state should provide
 full funding for state positions, including public defenders, to meet their staffing needs without requiring
 supplementation from local governments.
- If any locality supplements its Commonwealth's Attorney's salary as many localities already do, this creates an unfunded mandate requiring that they supplement Public Defenders' salaries in a similar fashion.

Public Safety: False reporting

Causing a telephone, digital pager, or other device to alert with intent to annoy; emergency communications; penalty.

<u>HB1590</u> (Sullivan) (Courts of Justice) / <u>SB1034</u> (McPike) (General Laws) modernize the harassing phone call statute to include any communications that may ring or otherwise signal or alert. Under current law, only telephones and digital pagers are included within the ambit of the statute. VACo and VML support.

False emergency communication to emergency personnel; penalties; report.

HB1613 (Williams Graves) (Courts of Justice) / SB1291 (Deeds) (Judiciary) create a Class 1 misdemeanor for any person to knowingly report, or cause another to report in reliance on intentionally false information provided by such person, a false emergency communication to any emergency personnel that results in an emergency response. The bill makes it is a Class 6 felony if such false emergency communication results in an emergency response during which and because of such emergency response any person suffers a serious bodily injury and a Class 5 felony if any person is killed. The bill authorizes any locality to provide by ordinance that a person convicted of such false emergency communication shall be liable for the reasonable expense in responding to such false emergency communication. The bill also requires the Secretary of Education, together with the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, to convene a work group for the purpose of establishing best practices, policies, and procedures for school personnel in the event of false information resulting in an emergency response at or near a school. VACo and VML support the bill.

Labor

Workers' Compensation Act

Workers' compensation; post-traumatic stress disorder incurred by dispatchers.

HB1631 (Bulova) (Commerce and Energy) / SB1088 (Ebbin) (Finance and Appropriations) allow dispatchers to claim workers' compensation benefits relating to post-traumatic stress disorder under the Workers' Compensation Act. Currently, only law-enforcement officers and firefighters may claim such benefits. This bill would result in higher insurance costs to local governments. VACo does not oppose the policy intent of the bill but is opposed to the legislation as it is a significant unfunded mandate. VML's position is that JLARC should study the fiscal impact prior to any legislation.

Workers' compensation; presumption for law-enforcement officers with back, hip, knee, etc.

HB1905 (Batten) (Commerce and Energy) establishes a workers' compensation presumption for back, hip, knee, and neck injuries that cause the death or disability of law-enforcement officers, as defined in the bill, who have completed five years of service and are required to wear a duty belt, as defined in the bill, as a condition of employment. This bill would significantly increase local government risk insurer liability, which would in turn result in higher insurance costs to local governments. VACo does not oppose the policy intent of the bill but is opposed to the legislation as it is a significant unfunded mandate. VML has no position on this bill.

Workers' compensation: adding post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder, or depressive disorder' law-enforcement officers and firefighters.

<u>HB1775</u> (O'Quinn) (Commerce and Energy) / <u>HB2322</u> (Campbell) (Commerce and Energy) add anxiety disorder and depression to covered illnesses for public safety officers and firefighters to the coverage the General Assembly created for post-traumatic stress disorder in 2020. VACo and VML do not oppose the legislation.

Elections

The administration of elections continues to be a topic of interest among the General Assembly. A series of bills have been filed to revisit changes to election law that were implemented in recent years, including legislation to reinstate the requirement that voters present a photo ID; lower the number of days during which absentee voting in person is available; eliminate the use of drop-off locations for absentee ballots; eliminate the permanent absentee voter list; and limit eligibility for voter registration after the close of registration records, among other proposals. Given the differences in party control between the two chambers, it is unlikely that major changes to election laws will be enacted this year. However, there are several bills dealing with aspects of election administration that are of interest to local governments.

Ranked choice voting in localities

HB1751 (Davis) (Privileges and Elections) / HB2118 (Hudson) (Privileges and Elections) — Under current law, ranked-choice voting is allowed at local option for members of a county board of supervisors or a city council. Both HB1751 and HB2118 expand the eligibility for ranked-choice voting; HB1751 would allow it to be used for local offices or school board elections, at the option of the local governing body, and HB2118 would allow it for any local or constitutional office, also at the option of the local governing body. HB1751 further extends eligibility to primaries, including federal and Presidential, with the decision to conduct the primary by ranked-choice voting to be determined by the party.

Unfortunately, not every locality currently has the ability to conduct a primary via ranked-choice voting due to technology and software capabilities, cost, or staffing; the patron of HB1751 is working with VML and VACo to mitigate concerns about local capacity to implement the proposal. VML and VACo do not oppose the concept of ranked-choice voting but want to ensure that it is implemented in a way that avoids unfunded mandates or limitations of local option or authority.

Marijuana

Three bills introduced this week in the General Assembly seek to legalize the recreational sale of marijuana and marijuana products either through the creation of a regulated retail market or through existing medical dispensaries selling direct to the public without a recommendation from a prescriber.

Cannabis control; retail market; transitional sales; penalties.

HB1464 (Hodges) would permit existing medical retailers to sell marijuana and marijuana products July 1, 2023, to adults 21 and older. Includes local authority to hold a referendum to prohibit the recreational sale of marijuana from non-medical dispensaries, provides local authority to levy a three percent tax on recreational retail sales of marijuana, does not include local zoning authority.

VML Supports including language that local zoning authority applies to recreational marijuana retailers to HB1464.

Cannabis control; retail market; transitional sales; penalties.

HB1750 (Webert) establishes regulations for a recreational market for marijuana, which would allow sales of recreational marijuana to begin in 2025. The bill also provides the Cannabis Control Authority with the authority to promulgate regulations for the licensing and regulation of a recreational retail market and recreational marijuana products with sales starting no sooner than Jan. 1, 2025. Includes local authority to hold a referendum, provides for local zoning authority for cannabis recreational retail operations, provides local authority to regulate the hours of retailer operations, provides for a local distribution of one third of the state levied 12 percent tax on recreational retail sales for localities with retail operations.

VML supports clarifying that towns that hold a referendum are not also subject to results of a referendum held by a county.

Cannabis control; retail market; transitional sales; regulated hemp products; penalties.

SB1133 (Ebbin) (Rehabilitation and Social Services) establishes a framework for recreational sales to take place and for relevant state agencies and departments to promulgate the necessary regulations for the establishment of a market in the next two years and in the intervening period of time allow existing medical marijuana retailers starting July 1, 2023, to sell marijuana and marijuana products to persons 21 years and older without a prescription as is currently required. Includes local authority to hold a referendum on whether recreational sales will be allowed in a locality, provides local authority to levy a three percent tax on recreational sales by ordinance, does not include local zoning authority.

VML supports including language that local zoning authority applies to recreational marijuana retailers.

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